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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LABOR CALLS ON GON TO REJECT ELECTION
RESULTS

REF: ABUJA 747

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Following up on its strong April 17 statement on the Gubernatorial and state assembly elections (reftel), the National Labor Congress (NLC) issued a statement on April 24 that "the long-term interests of our nation will be better served by rejecting these elections." The statement maintains that the April 21 elections were "programmed to fail" and commits the NLC to working with civil society groups to "fashion a way out of what is now clearly a national political crisis." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT. With the election of a new NLC General Secretary, John Odah, in February, many in the labor movement

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expected a reassertion of the NLC's role in Nigerian politics. It appears that the April 14 and 21 elections have provided just the venue for such a reawakening. The NLC's sister organization, the Trade Union Congress (TUC, a federation of managerial-level employee unions) has been meeting with civil society groups and domestic monitors and expects to make a public statement in the near future as well. With the May Day labor holiday approaching, there are reports that the NLC and TUC are meeting to discuss a national strike. Reports are also circulating that Nigeria's oil unions (PENGASSAN and NUPENG) are being pressured by disgruntled opposition politicians to strike over the conduct of the polls. (NOTE: TUC President Peter Esele is also President of PENGASSAN.) END COMMENT.

¶3. (U) Begin text of NLC Press Statement released on April 24.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE EMERGING POLITICAL CRISES

The Nigeria Labour Congress finds it difficult to accept the outcome of the presidential elections and the emergence of

Alhaji Yar' Adua. This is not because we have any personal disagreement with him, but the fact that he is a beneficiary of a fundamentally flawed electoral process which was programmed to fail.

The plan to subvert the will of the people, rig the elections and impose a politically disabled leadership on the country was so clear that the NLC convened an urgent meeting of its Central Working Committee on April 19, 2007 in what has turned out to be a vain attempt to steer the country away from an avoidable disaster.

The NLC's communique at the end of that meeting declared that "Given the despicable conduct of the last elections, Congress has lost faith in the capacity of the Prof. Maurice Iwu-led INEC to conduct credible elections on April 21, 2007 and the proposed fresh state elections".

It is tragic that the country has come to this sorry state at the cost of over 200 lives, hundreds of injured persons, massive destruction of property and the loss of billions of naira. Indeed, this highly compromised electoral process was in the words of President Olusegun Obasanjo "a do-or-die" affair which had to be won by PDP by any means necessary and at whatever cost to the country.

Specifically, the National Assembly and Presidential elections, just like the state elections, were characterized by late voting and non-appearance of electoral officials in many parts of the country, severe shortage of ballot papers, declaration of results even in places where elections were not held, under-age voting, voter intimidation, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes and a general subversion of the people's will.

Additionally, INEC indulged itself in self-inflicted logistical problems such as wanting to distribute election materials across our vast country only hours before polls

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were scheduled to open. Also, millions of ballot papers especially for the senatorial elections were unusable because logos of some political parties were omitted.

Generally, the INEC under a self-glorifying Prof. Maurice Iwu was an unmitigated disaster. The Presidency compounded the political crises by employing the armed forces, the police and other security agencies in its "do-or-die" plans thereby compromising the integrity and moral standing of these institutions. Also to cover its tracks, the Presidency has embarked on a campaign of calumny against Senate President Ken Nnamani as part of the plans to intimidate the National Assembly and reduce its capacity to intervene in the crisis.

It is clear that Nigerians have been robbed of a unique and historical opportunity to freely choose their leaders. The NLC thinks that the Presidency is being half smart and myopic by dangling appeal tribunals before the victims of this blatant robbery carried out in the presence of domestic and international election observers.

We are particularly worried that compromises, that legitimise the subversion of the people's will and mandate, weaken and compromise the growth of democracy in our country.

The NLC is convinced that the long-term interests of our nation will be better served by rejecting these elections. Congress, therefore, commits itself to working with broad-based interest groups to fashion a way out of what is now clearly a national political crisis.

The NLC commands the resilience of Nigerians and urges them to be eternally vigilant.

(signed)
John Odah

General Secretary

End text of Press Statement.
CAMPBELL